



School of Social Work

4756 Cass Avenue
Detroit, MI 48202

September 30, 2015

Dear Distinguished members of the House Children and Families Committee:

My name is Angelique Day, and I am an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at Wayne State University and founding director of the Transition to Independence Program, a college access and retention program for foster care youth interested in pursuing a post-secondary credential. I am delighted to see HB 4022 up for review in committee today. There are 11.1 million incidents of identity theft in the United States (or 1.2 victims every 3 seconds), and persons who are 18 to 24 years of age are most likely to be victims. Youth in foster care are at high risk for becoming victim of identity theft. Parents, grandparents, family members, foster parents, social workers, group home personnel and many others regularly have access to a foster youth's Social Security number, birth date, birth certificate and other personal, identifying information. Too often, this access is abused for everything from opening credit cards, buying cars, obtaining cable TV to fraudulently providing identification for medical care and criminal matters. Many foster youth do not learn that their identities have been stolen and their credit destroyed until they have exited care and apply for credit. A failure to clear up identity theft can result in impediments to renting an apartment, securing a student loan, getting a job, or obtaining credit necessary to build assets. Complicating the problem is the reality that repairing credit problems caused by identity theft can be a complex, expensive, and time-consuming process. Victims of identity theft spend an average of 330 hours repairing damage to their credit caused by identity theft. Further, victims of identity theft average over \$3,300 in lost wages due to the theft and, on average, incur over \$850 in expenses to repair the damage to their credit. Thus, once a youth has determined that his or her identity has been stolen, they need immediate and appropriate assistance to repair the problem. Otherwise, the credit issues resulting from identity theft will impede the ability of the foster youth to achieve self-sufficiency and financial security.

In 2011, President Obama, signed the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (P.L. 112-34) which requires that, for any youth in foster care at age 16 or older, the state must annually obtain the child's credit report, provide it to the youth at no cost, and supply the youth with an explanation of the contents of the report and with appropriate guidance and counseling services. While this law and the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act provides tools for consumers to monitor and protect their credit, there are no federal or state laws that exist today that comprehensively address the issue of identity theft in foster care in terms of both detecting the identity theft through required credit checks, notifying youth, the youth's foster parent, caseworker, attorney, and any legal representative of the youth of any findings, and repairing the damage to the youth's credit in a timely manner. We encourage you to take this next step with the legislation before you now to close this concerning gap in current policy.

Sincerely,